

"If you are interested, you can be on anything."

Parent

■ Offering a wide range of roles to parent and business board members

Community representatives come to the board with different interests, skills, and time to commit. When a wide range of roles are offered to both parents and business people, each is able to determine the part he or she wishes to play. Participant choice is more likely to ensure that all find an interesting and satisfying role.

Issues and considerations

Business people are valued for their contributions to personnel, administration, and fiscal activities: as a result, they are most often offered these roles. To develop parent leaders, parents need the same opportunities.

■ Supporting participation: Logistics and relationships

Effective community participation requires attending to both logistics and relationships. Parents and business people must be able to attend meetings and feel invited to actively participate. In partnerships that have high levels of parent satisfaction, parents identify a larger number of board members who are supportive and encouraging of their participation. Developing interpersonal relationships is key to supporting ongoing and meaningful involvement.

Issues and considerations

Different representatives have different logistical needs. These must be continuously negotiated. The encouragement and support of the executive director and a few other board members may not be enough. A more concerted effort could occur if mandated agency representatives also focused on developing relationships with community representatives.

"There is definitely an effort to make me feel included. I have that feeling from the whole board or I wouldn't be on it. I think everybody makes an effort to somehow, in their own way, to make you feel a part of what's going on."

Parent